



# Researching a Company Online

**H3**

Researching employers is imperative to successful career planning and job searching, and the development of the Internet has made doing the research much more bearable. This resource will guide you through different steps to take and resources to use in making your online employer researching as easy as possible.

## Public vs. Private

Before starting your Internet research, determine whether the company is publicly held (traded on a stock exchange), privately owned or a subsidiary of a publicly held organization. You will be much more successful in obtaining information on publicly held companies. Public companies must report certain financial information to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and their shareholders. Also, serious investors use the Internet to research potential stock purchases or monitor companies in their portfolios. As a result, the Internet provides much more information on public corporations than on private companies.

## Ticker Symbols

A key first step in Internet employer research is to identify the stock exchange ticker symbol for the company of interest. Either of the following sites will identify the ticker symbol for a public company. Be sure to make a note of each symbol, as you will be using this information throughout the research process.

- *Yahoo* Ticker Symbol Lookup
- *Pathfinder* Ticker Symbol Lookup

## Company Overview

If you successfully identify the ticker symbol, you can collect some quick, useful summary information at the sites listed below. If you are unable to locate a ticker

symbol for your company, you may be researching a private company or a subsidiary of a public company. Try typing the company name in the search box. If you determine that your company is a subsidiary of a public company, you will be more successful if you focus your research on the parent organization.

- *Hoover's Online* is a widely respected service that provides timely and detailed information on more than 50,000 public and private companies.
- *CorpTech Database* of high-tech companies provides profiles, competitor information, industry rankings, and other data on more than 50,000 public and private high-tech organizations.
- *CompaniesOnline* from Dun & Bradstreet and *Lycos* provides addresses, phone numbers, annual sales figures, numbers of employees, and other information on more than 900,000 public and private companies.
- *Individual.com* offers news, research and contacts for 100,000 companies.
- If you are looking for information on a private company, the *Public Record Databases* compiled by Pacific Information Resources, Inc. may reveal some information.

## Addresses & Telephone Numbers

The Internet makes finding nationwide telephone numbers and addresses easier than ever.

- *InfoSpace* provides a wide variety of resources for locating businesses, people, e-mail addresses, news and travel information. *InfoSpace* also offers a reverse lookup search engine that returns a name and address from a phone or fax number.
- *Big Yellow* provides an extensive database of more than 16 million U.S. business listing.

### **Company Home Pages**

Most businesses use their home pages as a marketing or communication tool for generating and retaining business. As such, corporate sites may provide annual reports, news articles, business ventures and information about products and services. You should spend a good portion of your research time reviewing the information available at your company's home page.

- First, if you haven't yet located the home page for your company, try guessing the address. Many businesses have a Website address that looks like this:

<http://www.companyname.com>

- If that doesn't lead to immediate results, *Whois.net* allows you to search a database of registered domain names.
- *AltaVista* is a search engine that is particularly effective for locating company home pages.
- *Dogpile* is a meta-search engine that will search the major search engines and give you the top results from each.

### **Financial Information**

Public companies must report certain financial information to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and their shareholders. You can review annual reports (10K), quarterly reports (10Q), or other reports such as 13Q ownership filings from The SEC *EDGAR Database*, *10K Wizard*, or *EDGAR Online*. The company financial profile is another key business intelligence resource. These profiles are often filled with

useful and timely information including financial data, product details and marketing trends. Check out the following sites for this type of information.

- *Yahoo! Finance* pulls together such resources as *Reuters*, *PR Newswire*, *Businesswire*, and *Market Guide* to provide comprehensive information on public companies.
- *Invest-O-Rama Company Research* provides links to extensive company information including stock quotes, profiles, charts, news, SEC filings and articles.
- Like *Invest-O-Rama Company Research*, *Daily Stocks* links to a wide variety of financial and news information on public companies.
- *Wall Street Research Net* provides access to a variety of data including an excellent assortment of graphs and charts on financial performance.
- *Moneynet Quotes* allows searching for multiple stock quotes simultaneously and displays the results in charts providing a quick comparison of stock prices for a number of companies/competitors.

### **News & Periodical Articles**

The next step in the employer research process is to review newspaper articles, press releases, and periodical articles on your company of interest. The local or city newspaper for the company's corporate headquarters serves as a great starting point. This resource will likely have numerous articles on the organization. To assist you in finding the local newspaper, a number of Websites provide links to online newspapers throughout the world including *NewsCentral*, *E&P MediaInfo Links*, and *NewsPaperLinks* (U.S. only). Once you find the local newspaper for your company, scan the main page for the terms "Archives" or "Search" or "Back Issues" to research past articles.

One excellent resource for news information is *Yahoo! Finance*. Listed below are other key sites for locating company news articles and press releases.

- *Transium's Business Search Engine* provides a rich mix of articles from main stream and specialty periodicals and categorizes the material to reveal relationships. Abstracts are available for free, and full-text articles can be purchased for a nominal charge.
- *News Alert* offers stock quotes; news articles from *Reuters*, *PR Newswire*, and *Businesswire*; and a wide variety of other financial information.
- At *Hoover's Online*, you'll find a number of news and periodical articles on public and private companies.
- *Northern Light* searches a variety of newspapers, newswires, and magazines and provides abstracts and citations of all articles for free. Full-text documents can be purchased for a nominal fee.
- *Excite's Newstracker* searches the Internet for recent news articles on your company.

In addition to newspapers and press releases, periodical articles also provide valuable company information. For example, the 39 local "Business Journals" across the country are important business resources for many professionals. You can search all 39 journals simultaneously at the *American City Business Journals* Website. Other helpful periodical resources include:

- *TIME.com*, where you can search Time Warner publications including *Fortune*, *Time* and *Money*.
- If you are looking for periodicals on a specific topic area, *NewsDirectory.com* and *AJR Newslink* provide links to a large number of online magazines.
- After researching a company, you may want to stay current on news articles, analysts' reports, patents, trademarks and other business activities. Register (free) at *Company Sleuth* to receive daily email

reports on up to ten U.S. public companies.

### **Business Meta-Sites**

Another company research tool that should not be overlooked is the business meta-site. These Websites link to a very large number of online business resources from around the world. *Corporate Information* offers an extensive list of links to public, private, domestic and international resources for company research.

- *A Business Researcher's Interests* provides access to thousands of resources on cutting-edge topics including business process engineering, knowledge management, intranet intellectual property and MIS research.
- Loaded with categorized links, *CEO Express* is a wonderful site to consider as a start page for employer research assignments.
- *Price's List of Lists* is a comprehensive clearinghouse of links to articles listing the top ranked industries, organizations, schools, products and people.
- The *Financial Data Finder* provides a directory of resources for financial information both on and off the Internet.
- A useful resource for researching public opinion on companies and competitors is *Deja.com*. This site allows you to search newsgroups for discussions about companies and their products.
- Two other interesting sites for reviewing public discussions on stock performance are *SiliconInvestor's Stock Talk* and *Raging Bull*.

### **Non-Profit Organizations**

If you are interested in nonprofit organizations, you can find valuable information at a number of key Web sites.

- *Guidestar* provides a searchable directory of nonprofit organizations.
- The *Internet Nonprofit Center* provides a library of information about nonprofit organizations, a searchable directory of

organizations, discussion forums and links to other Web sites of interest.

- The *Literature of the Nonprofit Sector* offers a searchable database of philanthropic literature.
- The *Better Business Bureau's Philanthropic Advisory Service* reports on major charitable organizations. Reports include an overview of the organization, program information, financial data, ratings on compliance with CBBB standards for charitable solicitation and governance information.
- The *National Center for Charitable Statistics* collects statistics on nonprofit organizations.
- *About.com* provides links to a large number of nonprofit-related Web sites.

### **International Business**

The Internet provides a wealth of information for those concerned with international business and trade. For example, in the "Business Meta-Sites" section, we discussed *Corporate Information* and *A Business Researcher's Interests*. In addition to U.S. information, these sites also link to valuable international content. If you are looking for international newspapers and periodicals, *NewsCentral* and *E&P MediaInfo Links* offer links to many worldwide publications. Listed below are a number of additional international business resources.

- *International Business Resources on the WWW* provides an extensive index to international news, trade information, directories, mailing lists and government resources.

- *VIBES* contains more than 1,600 links to international business, trade, country-specific sites and economic information.
- *The Wright Research Center* offers profiles on more than 18,000 companies worldwide.
- At *Hoover's UK*, find profiles for numerous United Kingdom and European companies.
- *Foreign Government Resources* contains links to embassies, chambers-of-commerce, international agencies, news and demographic resources.
- *Tradeport* provides a comprehensive database of country-specific guides and market research reports.
- At *Kompass*, search an international database of 1.5 million manufacturing companies. *Kompass* is an excellent site for finding sales prospects.
- *InternationalAffairs.com* offers a growing directory of international resources arranged by topic, region and country.
- Like the SEC *EDGAR* database, *SEDAR* provides access to annual reports and other securities information for Canadian companies.
- Locate phone numbers from around the world at the *International Phone Directories* Website.

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